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Multilingualism

Multilingualism

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The report, submitted pursuant to resolution 59/309 of 22 June 2005, gives a comprehensive assessment of multilingualism in the Secretariat.

After reviewing the status of the Organization's working languages and official languages and the role of the Coordinator for multilingualism, the report addresses internal communications, in particular through analysis of Conference Services and the question of interpretation for official meetings at the various conference centres. Communication among staff has been given new impetus with the introduction of a concerted strategy, supported by iSeek, the Secretariat Intranet.

Various media promote external communication, in particular audio-visual media, radio and television, due to the diversity and multiplicity of programmes supported by partnerships; because of its diverse content, the Internet site attracts numerous visitors. The United Nations Information Centres play a very important role in promoting multilingual communication by the Secretariat, by ensuring effective distribution of United Nations documentation and the wide dissemination of its ideals.

Human resources remain the key to the success of effective multilingualism within the Secretariat. Various measures are analysed in this report, in particular the language training programme, training in general and recruitment for peacekeeping operations.

Finally, various recommendations are made in order to increase the balance among the official languages within the Secretariat, for example, the establishment of a network of focal points for multilingualism and a strengthened policy on partnerships.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report follows up on resolution 59/309 of 22 June 2005, in which the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its sixty-first session a comprehensive report on the implementation of its resolutions on multilingualism, including the implications of resolution 59/309. The General Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to report to it on the measures that can be taken by international organizations within the United Nations system to strengthen the protection, promotion and preservation of all languages, in particular languages spoken by persons belonging to linguistic minorities and languages facing extinction.

2. During its fifty-sixth, fifty-seventh and fifty-eighth sessions, the General Assembly also considered problems related to multilingualism, including the budget (resolution 56/253), human resources management (57/305), pattern of conferences (56/242, 57/283 B) and questions relating to information (56/64, 57/130 B and 59/126 B). Furthermore, the Joint Inspection Unit produced a wide-ranging study on multilingualism in the United Nations system (A/58/93). On the basis of these documents and a status report on the question, it appears that multilingualism remains a priority for the Secretariat, even if technical difficulties persist in achieving parity among the six official languages of the United Nations. This report was drafted in French as a sign of the desire to promote multilingualism.

3. An essential factor in harmonious communication among peoples, multilingualism is of very particular importance to the United Nations. By promoting tolerance, it thus ensures effective and increased participation of all in its work, as well as greater effectiveness, better outcomes and more involvement. Multilingualism should be preserved and encouraged by various actions within the United Nations system, in a spirit of partnership and communication.

4. The balance among the six official languages, Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish, with English and French used in day-to-day professional exchanges, has been an ongoing concern of all the Secretaries-General. Numerous activities have been undertaken, from 1946 to the present, to promote the use of the official languages to ensure that the United Nations, its goals and actions were understood by the widest possible public.

5. There are several aspects of multilingualism that should be analysed separately in order to grasp a more comprehensive picture of the phenomenon and its importance in the work and goals of the Organization.

6. Concrete and pragmatic proposals are also presented in this report in order further to promote the multilingual dimension in the work of the Organization and to include these issues in the in-depth reform process currently in progress in the United Nations.

II. Status of languages

7. Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish are the six official languages of the United Nations. English and French are the working languages of the United Nations Secretariat (resolution 2 (I) of 1 February 1946).

8. In the regional commissions, the distribution of working languages differs according to the location of offices and other commissions. Thus, the Economic Commission for Africa and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia work in English, Arabic and French; English, French and Russian are used at the Economic Commission for Europe. English, Spanish, French and Portuguese are the official languages of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (article 44 of its rules of procedure). English, Chinese, French and Russian are the working languages of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

9. In order to disseminate its ideas and ideals as widely as possible, the United Nations must communicate in a large number of languages other than the working languages and official languages.

III. The place of multilingualism in United Nations communications

A. Coordinator for multilingualism

10. By its resolution 54/64 of 6 December 1999, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to appoint a senior Secretariat official as coordinator for questions relating to multilingualism throughout the Secretariat. This significant act demonstrates the importance given by the Secretariat to these questions. Initially entrusted to the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, since 31 March 2003 this function has been the responsibility of the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information.

11. The task of the Coordinator is to harmonize the measures implemented and to propose strategies to ensure that United Nations linguistic practices are in keeping with the recommendations and provisions of the various resolutions relating to multilingualism. Among other things, the Coordinator centralizes the proposals and requests having to do with multilingualism throughout the Secretariat.

12. In an effort to promote multilingualism throughout the Secretariat, the Coordinator has sought the participation of all departments and offices. Headquarters and the Offices at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi have thus designated a coordinator for multilingualism. These officials have been informed whenever a question relating to multilingualism was discussed in their duty station. The Coordinator also met with Member States on the subject several times.

13. The issue of multilingualism should be considered from several angles, in particular internal and external communications. Internal communications take place within the Organization, whether official communications between Member States and all the actors involved in the work of the United Nations or communications among Member States and the United Nations Secretariat. A distinction must be made among working languages and official languages. External communication, intended for the widest possible audience, can include languages other than official languages used to disseminate the messages of the United Nations. Finally, in order to promote all the aspects of multilingualism, the question of human resources must be envisaged separately.

B. Internal communications

14. Consultations have revealed the influence that the language of the host city exercises whenever it is also a working language. Thus, English is largely predominant at Headquarters and in Nairobi, but also in Vienna, while French, Spanish or Arabic are widely used in daily work in the offices at Geneva, Santiago de Chile and Beirut, respectively.

1. Official communications with and among Member States

(a) Conference Services

15. The main reasons for which informal meetings are programmed without interpretation services, described in document A/58/363, remain valid. As such meetings were not provided for in the official calendar of conferences and meetings approved by the General Assembly, services for these meetings are offered, whenever possible, on an "as available" basis. This varies greatly by duty station: the overwhelming majority of requests for interpretation services for informal meetings are met at Headquarters. In the other duty stations, response to these requests is a function of the budget allocated for conference services and meetings on the calendar.

Table 1
Statistics on provision of conference services to regional and other major groupings of Member States in the four duty stations (New York, Geneva, Nairobi, Vienna)

	2005				
	Meetings with interpretation services			*Meetings without interpretation services*	
	Requested	*Provided*	*Not provided*	*Requested*	*Provided*
New York	242	192	49	913	913
Geneva	66	59	4	792	721
Vienna	0	15	0	417	417
Nairobi	17	17	0	283	283

Source: Report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences (A/61/129).

16. With regard to language staff, it should be noted that the high number of retirements and the massive number of new recruits places a heavy burden on the training capacities of the services. As the Secretary-General recalled in his report on the pattern of conferences (A/60/93), the General Assembly had expressed concern at the vacant interpreter posts in the main conference centres: New York, Vienna, Geneva and Nairobi.

17. Although efforts have been made, the situation remains worrisome at Nairobi, where, because of the classification level of the posts, it is difficult to find candidates who agree to go there to fill language posts. The option of lateral transfer has, however, allowed certain posts to be filled, while the solution consisting in relying on temporary translators and interpreters is unsatisfactory in the long term in

that its does not ensure continuity and continuation of the work, and involves ongoing training of staff who should be able to rely on experience and an in-depth knowledge of the workings of the Organization in order to be able to work in language posts.

18. The initiatives of the Group of Arab States, China and the Russian Federation to facilitate the recruitment of language staff in their respective languages are highly appreciated. However, a significant number of vacant translation and interpretation posts remain, and the Secretariat is studying the possibility of holding specific examinations for the duty stations lacking qualified staff.

19. With regard to terminology adopted by the Organization, informational meetings for each of the official languages are held regularly with delegations. This initiative is highly appreciated by Member States as a forum for discussion on improvement of language services in particular.

20. The Secretariat continues to study technical solutions — computer-assisted translation, voice recognition, off-site translation, for example — that could support the work of the language staff and help to make up for the scarcity of qualified staff and further improve the quality and productivity of conference services. The training programme on use of new information technologies has intensified during the past year.

(b) Official documentation

21. In this area, the rules governing simultaneous distribution of documents in the six official languages are observed for all documents of deliberating bodies; these documents are accessible in the Official Document System (ODS) and are posted only when issued in all the official languages.

22. Free access to ODS has led to considerable progress in the multilingualism of the Organization website, and the statistics on visitors to the site have increased significantly in each of the official languages. Since 1998, a retroactive digitization programme for documents earlier than 1993 was undertaken by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library of the Department of Public Information, which, inter alia, has allowed Security Council documents for the period 1974-1993 to be added to ODS in all the official languages.

2. Communications among staff members in different offices

23. In order to create a culture of understanding and mutual respect and to ensure the conditions for optimum communication among staff members, it is important to put in place measures to promote multilingualism in internal communications. In that regard, it should be stressed that the senior officials, in their statements to staff, communicate in the working languages of the Secretariat and the duty stations.

24. It was also at the initiative of senior officials that a new internal communications tool, the iSeek Intranet, was established as part of a comprehensive communications strategy to improve access to information and messages within the Secretariat, and to promote bottom-up, top-down and lateral communications, thus helping to strengthen staff solidarity within the Secretariat. On 14 July 2006, the United Nations Office at Geneva joined the iSeek community, followed by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development on 17 July. On this occasion, a French version of iSeek, covering the same functions as the English version, was officially launched.

25. In the same spirit, the United Nations Global Contact Directory, another tool connecting the Secretariat staff among the different offices, is now available in the two working languages of the Secretariat. The interface for access provides the option of choosing the search language.

26. To complete this overview of internal communications, it should be noted that efforts are under way to ensure that the new internal electronic signage is available in the two working languages at Headquarters.

3. Impact of information technology reform

27. A vast strategy of renewal of the entire information infrastructure of the Secretariat is in the process of development and will promote multilingualism. Indeed, with new techniques for reuse of content, production in several languages is facilitated: a document can be created just once and stored in a single system, allowing its content to be reused. The workload is thereby reduced by maximizing the initial intellectual inputs provided, which allows the same content to be issued from a single source but in different formats.

28. A new coherent policy of standardization of practices, for infrastructure and equipment as well as content and form, is also in the process of implementation for the Secretariat as a whole. In this regard, this new content management policy could promote multilingualism in that it authorizes reuse of content.

C. External communications

29. The mission of the Department of Public Information is to make known and understood the ideals and messages of the United Nations all over the world, in order to raise support for the Organization, by means of key intermediaries, including the press, non-governmental organizations and educational establishments. To that end, the widest and most appropriate possible distribution of information and communications products it creates must be ensured. The Department thus works systematically to expand the global audience for its products and activities, which include radio and television programmes, the Internet site, the network of United Nations Information Centres, and the guided tour programmes conducted at the main offices.

Table 2
Expansion of the scope of Department of Public Information products (2003-2005)

Some products of the Department	*2003*	*2004*	*2005*
Annual conference of non-governmental organizations (participants in interactive Internet site)	520	1 562	21 000
E-mail subscribers to News Centre service	22 053	33 500	44 217
Guided tours (visitors)	323 169	360 157	412 042
UN Chronicle (hard copy and online — number of readers)	384 620	439 420	716 997
UN Radio (estimated number of listeners)	133 263 150	n/a	299 095 000

1. Radio and television

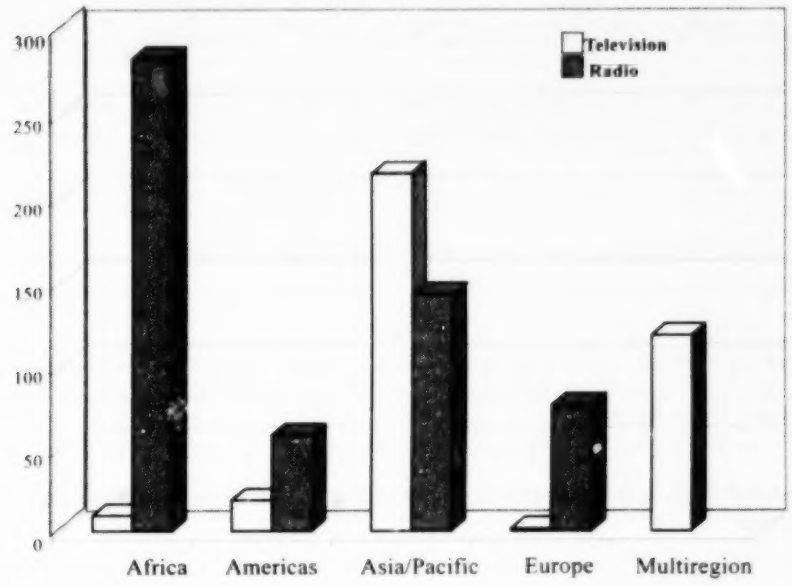
30. According to a survey conducted with broadcasters of the United Nations radio and television programmes, over 200 radio stations and 60 television channels, the television programmes of the Department of Public Information reach around 300 million viewers every week. The audience for these programmes has doubled compared to 2003, in part because of the 20 per cent increase in the number of partner stations and channels. According to that survey as well, several major channels, including Sky News and CCTV, use UNIFEED, which broadcasts daily footage shot by the United Nations. The Department's two major television programmes, *The UN in Action*, a series of short news reports, which reaches 292 million viewers, and *World Chronicle*, which is watched by 8 million people in all regions of the world, represent 97 per cent of its audience.

31. The integration of new technologies has further expanded the audience reach of United Nations radio programmes, in addition to the increase in partnerships mentioned in the preceding paragraph. According to the same survey, the Department of Public Information radio programmes produced in the six official languages and Portuguese alone draw an audience estimated at over 300 million listeners per week, not counting listeners with a satellite link. United Nations Radio has also established working relationships with national radio stations in Portuguese-speaking African countries, to which it regularly provides programmes in that language.

32. On the occasion of the Organization's sixtieth anniversary, United Nations Radio launched several special initiatives, including a project by the Russian language unit entitled "60 years in 60 minutes" and an essay contest "How I see the UN", jointly organized by the Chinese service with partner radio stations in Shanghai, Tianjin and Henan. Six of the essays were recorded and broadcast on United Nations Radio. The winning essays were also published as a series in a mass circulation newspaper and a commemorative CD was produced.

33. The activities of the General Assembly and its President also received extensive coverage. In addition to rebroadcast of speeches of Heads of State and Government on national radio stations of the least developed countries during the general debate, United Nations Radio also broadcast interviews with Heads of State and Government and the ministers of the following Member States: Belarus, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cape Verde, Colombia, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Paraguay, Portugal, Republic of the Congo, Sudan and Togo.

Figure I
United Nations radio and television programmes: estimated weekly audience (in millions) by region



2. The United Nations website

34. The United Nations website, the electronic gateway to the Organization for the media, non-governmental organizations, educational establishments and the public at large, is maintained in the six official languages. Pursuant to the recommendations of the General Assembly on the achievement of full parity among the languages on the website, the Department of Public Information, the website manager, maintains continuing contact with the content-providing offices.

35. The websites of the General Assembly and the Security Council provide access to the documents and information of these bodies in the six official languages; the news centres of the Department of Public Information also provide continuing coverage of news in all languages. While this daily updating consumes a large proportion of the resources, it permits access to relevant and vital information in all languages.

36. Statistics on the use of the United Nations website show an increase in each of the official languages from 2004 to 2005. Thus, Arabic page hits increased by 41.23 per cent during that period. Tables 3 and 4 show the increase in the number of visits to the United Nations website for 2004 and 2005 as well as the number of new pages created and pages updated in 2004 by the Web Services Section of the Department.

Table 3
Increase in the number of visits to the United Nations website across languages

	Arabic	*Chinese*	*English*	*French*	*Russian*	*Spanish*	*Entire United Nations website*
Visits							
2004	42 525 599	80 332 093	1 813 864 719	148 614 628	45 947 257	200 282 006	2 331 566 302
2005	60 060 418	91 653 371	2 099 191 364	198 244 221	61 564 818	256 273 446	2 766 987 638
2005 vs. 2004 (percentage)	+41.23	+14.09	+15.73	+33.39	+33.99	+27.96	+18.68
Pages viewed							
2004	7 760 675	13 619 715	276 026 961	15 150 059	9 575 366	15 412 199	337 544 975
2005	10 178 618	18 433 275	318 133 891	18 267 863	11 873 869	19 678 662	396 566 178
2005 vs. 2004 (percentage)	+31.16	+35.34	+15.25	+20.58	+24.00	+27.68	+17.49

Source: Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations website: recent developments and progress towards parity among the official languages (A/AC.198/2006/3).

Table 4
New pages created and pages updated in 2004 by the Web Services Section of the Department of Public Information

New pages						*Updated pages*					
Arabic	*Chinese*	*English*	*French*	*Russian*	*Spanish*	*Arabic*	*Chinese*	*English*	*French*	*Russian*	*Spanish*
787	2 115	984	904	1 219	1 163	4 645	3 493	3 802	2 580	4 381	5 359

Source: Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations website: recent developments and progress towards parity among the official languages (A/AC.198/2006/3).

37. Other measures were implemented to achieve parity on the United Nations website. Thus, the merger of the European information centres into a single centre located at Brussels freed six posts which were redeployed to the Web Services Section. On the basis of resolution 60/109 B, six separate units have been established within the Department of Public Information for each of the official languages. The General Assembly also approved the establishment of four posts at the P-4 level for the 2006-2007 budget.

38. Partnerships have also been forged and external solutions identified with the assistance of some governments or government agencies. For example, the French and Spanish governments have provided experts for the development of the French and Spanish websites (this is done along with the use of interns and volunteers). The number of pages available in languages other than English has also increased thanks to external pro bono translations provided by the universities of Salamanca (Spain), Shaoxing (China) and Minsk (Belarus). In the latter case, there are constraints with respect to content editing, programming and processing, given the limited human resources available to the Department for that purpose.

39. It is also worth noting that some departments have taken action to build multilingual websites, albeit not in all the official languages. For example, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Management each maintain websites in all six official languages of the Organization. Considerable efforts have been put into developing a multilingual website and departments are sent frequent reminders on the need to provide information in the working and official languages. It is interesting to compare the situation of the Secretariat with those of the programmes, funds, institutes and other United Nations bodies. As the table below shows, 19 of the 25 programmes listed have at least a bilingual website.

Table 5
Languages of the websites of the United Nations programmes, funds and bodies

United Nations programmes, funds and bodies	*Official languages*	*Other languages*
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	English, French, Spanish	
International Trade Centre	English, French, Spanish	
United Nations Environment Programme	English, French	
United Nations Children's Fund	Arabic, English, French, Spanish	
United Nations Development Programme	English, French, Spanish	
United Nations Development Fund for Women	English	The websites of some national committees are in local languages, for example German or Japanese
United Nations Volunteers	English, French	Japanese version available
United Nations Capital Development Fund	English, French	
United Nations Population Fund	Arabic, English, French, Spanish	
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	English, French	Danish, Dutch, German, Finnish, Italian, Japanese
World Food Programme	Arabic, English, French, Spanish	German, Icelandic, Norwegian, Portuguese, Swedish

United Nations programmes, funds and bodies	*Official languages*	*Other languages*
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	Arabic, English, Spanish	Hebrew (under construction), Japanese
United Nations Human Settlements Programme	Arabic, Chinese, English, Spanish	
United Nations Institute for Training and Research	English, French	
United Nations Research Institute for Social Development	English, French, Spanish	
United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research	English, French	
United Nations International Research Institute for the Advancement of Women	English, French, Spanish	
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights	Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, Spanish	
United Nations University (UNU)		

Source: http://www.un.org

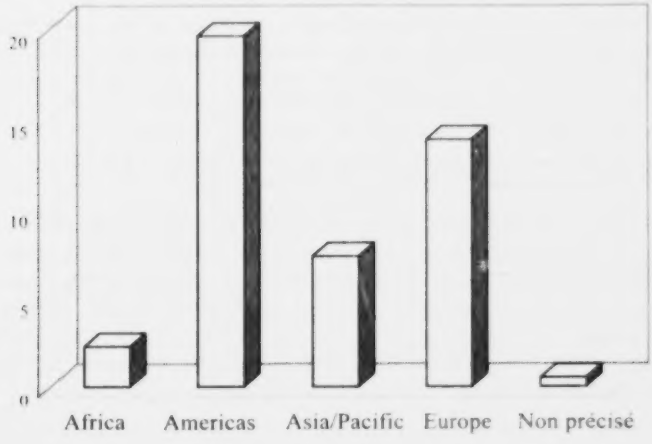
40. The United Nations web site also serves as an efficient cost-effective medium for the United Nations Webcast. It gives users worldwide live or on-demand access to meetings such as those of the Security Council, General Assembly or even press briefings held at the United Nations. In 2005, 7.2 million webcast clips — both live and archived — were viewed. In addition webcasting of open meetings of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council has expanded as a result of the opening of a new webcast studio and additional equipment. At the request of Member States, users can listen to statements in the original language or in English. This practice was introduced for the 2005 World Summit; the United Nations webcast plans to expand its Internet broadcast services into the six official languages after identification of the necessary and available resources for this project. Current technologies are also enhancing the multimedia nature of the site, which offers radio programmes over the Internet in various official and unofficial languages (Bangla, Hindi, Indonesian, Portuguese, Swahili and Urdu (see A/AC.198/2006/3)).

41. Achieving full parity among the six official languages on the United Nations website is a special challenge, not only for the Department of Public Information, but also for the content-providing offices and entities. This goal requires the mobilization of very considerable technical and human resources owing to the

substantial number of documents added daily to the site and deadlines that are often very short and do not always make dissemination in the six languages possible.

42. In addition, there are also infrastructural issues: the relevant computer networks and servers have to be more efficient and faster in order to provide users with the information requested as rapidly and as efficiently as possible.

Figure II
United Nations website: average weekly hits (in millions) by region (2005)



3. United Nations information centres

43. The United Nations information centres form a network covering more than 60 countries; they broadcast to and inform local audiences about the activities and goals of the Organization as part of the DPI integrated communications strategy. The centres use traditional means of communication such as the radio, newspapers or printed material, as well as new information and communication technologies, including development of Internet sites, to accomplish their mission. To reach as broad an audience as possible, these centres work in 33 languages and produce informational material in more than 80 languages.

44. The following examples illustrate how the United Nations information centres recently used traditional means of communication to promote the work of the United Nations. Prior to the United Nations Conference to Review Progress made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which was held in June and July 2006, the centres had organized briefings for and debates with local stakeholders on the issue of small arms and light weapons. Some of those proceedings were subsequently broadcast on local radio and/or television stations. Furthermore, background papers on the Conference were translated into many local languages and supplements of local newspapers on the issues covered by the Conference were published with assistance from the centres. The publication "Sixty ways the United Nations makes a difference" (www.un.org/un60/sixty_ways_un_makes_difference.html), produced to coincide with the sixtieth

anniversary, has been translated into 24 languages. As far as collaboration between local newspapers and information centres is concerned, the publication of an op-ed on the new Human Rights Council written by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights by 19 newspapers in 19 different countries and the publication by more than 70 newspapers in 40 countries of an op-ed article by the Secretary-General on the kick-off of the 2006 World Cup are worth mentioning. Arrangements are also under way to provide some information centres with recording devices, most of them used or from United Nations Radio stock, to enable them to produce radio programmes more effectively at the local level, and to contribute them to United Nations Radio's internationally distributed programmes.

45. The enhanced use of information and communication technologies is essential to strengthening the impact of United Nations information centres and the development of websites in local languages remains a priority for the Department. At present, 49 United Nations information centres, services and offices maintain websites in five official and 28 unofficial languages, including Armenian, Azeri, Belarusian, Czech, Farsi, Japanese, Kiswahili, Madagascan, Ukrainian, Urdu and Uzbek.

46. The unequal pace of website development has largely been the result of local connectivity problems and the lack of appropriate locally available skills. Staff training in information technology remains a priority despite inadequate funding and the Department is considering online training opportunities for the staff of those centres. The redeployment of local-level posts to centres in Cairo, Mexico City and Pretoria should make those posts available for webmasters and assist the centres in the surrounding region in website development and maintenance.

47. The United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe in Brussels was established on 1 January 2004 following the closure of information centres in nine Western European countries. One of the goals was to streamline and centralize information activities at one location to improve coordination with respect to the dissemination of the United Nations message in the entire region. Owing to its location near the headquarters of the European Union and related agencies, the Centre takes advantage of the presence of many representatives of European governments and non-governmental organizations and a number of international media outlets to disseminate its programmes to the target countries through major intermediaries. The Centre also serves as the gateway for access to information and data on the United Nations through its website, available in 13 languages, and its library, which has resources in most of the languages of Western Europe. Moreover, the Centre publishes a daily press review in 10 unofficial languages. It also translates newspaper and "op-ed" articles in those languages with the generous support of the Belgian Government, which not only defrays some translation costs but also assists with the publication of such articles in the major newspapers of Western Europe. For example, since the beginning of 2006, the Centre has translated and disseminated about 250 articles in Italian, published 55 op-ed articles in Scandinavian languages and given four to five interviews a month in German.

48. In 2005 the Department of Public Information made considerable progress in developing and refining its new strategic operating model at the field level. The new method of work at the regional and subregional levels involves ongoing daily contact and dialogue among United Nations information centres to discuss priorities, urgent communications issues and possible joint activities. The translation

of documents and information materials, preparation of original materials for web posting in local languages and consolidated outreach to regional media are examples of such joint activities.

49. The Department is continuing its efforts to regularly provide its constituencies and audiences in Portuguese-speaking developing countries with information products in that language. Thanks to funding from the Portuguese Government, the Desk for Portugal in the United Nations Regional Information Centre in Brussels prepares and circulates translations into Portuguese of key United Nations documents and the Department's information materials, both electronically and in hard copy, to all United Nations offices in Portuguese-speaking countries and maintains a Portuguese website. The Desk also maintains ongoing cooperation with *Africa Hoje*, a magazine published in Lisbon and widely read in Portuguese-speaking African countries.

4. Guided tour service

50. Guided tours are a very popular means of introducing the United Nations to the general public. Various duty stations have developed guided tours for their buildings. A survey conducted in 2005 at United Nations Headquarters in New York showed that those who went on the guided tour were extremely satisfied; they took tours in the following languages: Arabic, Croatian, Danish, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Korean, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swedish and United States sign language for the hearing impaired. Geneva currently offers tours in Albanian, Chinese, Czech, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, Slovak, Spanish, and Romanian. In Vienna, tours are conducted in 10 languages in addition to English and German. In Nairobi, tours are mainly conducted in English; upon request, they may also be conducted in French and Swahili.

D. Human resources

51. Multilingualism issues remain at the heart of recruitment policies, which also have to take into account the Organization's wish to draw upon the skills of the most highly qualified staff. To that end, job vacancies are published in the two working languages and are accessible worldwide via the Galaxy website, as are instructions, frequently asked questions and all other tools designed to facilitate the applications of potential candidates. Information on recruitment policy is available on the Organization's website in the six official languages. Furthermore, all vacancy announcements indicate that French and English are the two working languages of the United Nations Secretariat. For most Professional and higher category of staff, fluency in at least one of the Secretariat's official languages is required, with knowledge of local languages being an asset in the case of certain countries to which the Organization is likely to send staff.

52. Competitive examinations for language posts are held regularly, in the six official languages, in accordance with the needs of the Organization. Regular meetings are held with the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management to ascertain staffing requirements and draw up corresponding schedules of examinations.

1. Language teaching

53. In order to encourage Secretariat staff to communicate in all the official United Nations languages and to promote multilingualism in a multicultural environment, a language and communications programme has been set up in the main United Nations duty stations. The aim of these classes is to enable staff members to improve their knowledge of the official languages as well as to develop greater respect for cultural diversity.

54. These courses are taught at three levels: beginners, intermediate and advanced. In addition, specialized workshops on presentations, language through media, report writing, e-correspondence and linguistic and cultural diversity, are held regularly. A specialized website, which won the "UN 21 award" in 2005, also offers online language training for staff members.

55. At Headquarters and at the United Nations Office at Geneva courses are given in the six official languages; languages offered at the other offices vary according to their geographical situation. While English, Spanish and French are taught at all main offices, Arabic classes are not offered at Bangkok, and neither Chinese nor Russian are taught at Addis Ababa, Beirut and Nairobi.

56. Information on the courses offered to staff members is available, in several official languages, on the different websites set up by the training services. Language classes are available to all Secretariat staff members; in addition classes are also open to those employed by the funds and programmes represented at the different duty stations. The costs related to these lessons are borne by the employer body. Some offices enter into contracts with external partners for the provision of language lessons.

57. The number of language learners varies according to duty station. At Headquarters the figure has remained stable, at 4,900 students, while in Bangkok, for example, the numbers have increased from 321 in 2002 to 439 in 2005.

Table 6
Language teaching in Secretariat duty stations: 2005 statistics

	Addis Ababa	*Bangkok*	*Beirut*	*Geneva*	*Nairobi*	*New York*	*Santiago*	*Vienna*
English	505	172	88	447	128	835		103
Arabic	65	—	26	163	82	646	—	73
Chinese	—	109	—	145	—	390	—	31
Spanish	—	21	2	392	71	1 097		133
French	361	109	16	1 023	477	1 626		149
Russian	—	28	—	164	—	292	—	41
Total	**931**	**439**	**132**	**2 334**	**758**	**4 886**		**530**

58. In addition to teaching the official languages, some duty stations offer courses in local languages in order to facilitate greater integration of their staff into local life. Thus, courses in Thai are offered at two levels (beginners and experienced); in

Nairobi staff members can attend conversation classes, or more intensive language classes, in Kiswahili; and in Vienna German language classes are offered.

59. Incentives have been introduced to encourage staff to take language lessons; for Professional staff subject to geographical distribution, there is a system of accelerated step increments, while for General Services staff a system of monthly bonuses operates.

60. The new human resources policy measures introduced for the entire Secretariat, particularly those concerning mobility, should encourage staff to learn — or improve their knowledge of — the official and working languages, since staff members will now be required to work in several duty stations, where their language skills will be taken into account in their prospects for career advancement.

61. Of note here is an interesting initiative developed over a number of years by certain Governments, which offer linguistic immersion courses for senior staff members of the Secretariat, in order to encourage the practice of multilingualism. These courses consist in a language improvement programme and substantive sessions on conflict resolution.

2. Peacekeeping operations

62. Selecting and recruiting a sufficient number of qualified candidates with the necessary technical and French-language skills, proved to be a difficult task for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in 2004, given the increased number of operations in French-speaking territories. The Department adopted a four-point strategy aimed at recruiting the best candidates for civilian positions in peacekeeping operations. This strategy consists of the points described in the following paragraphs.

63. **The creation of a French version of the Galaxy recruitment website for peacekeeping operations**. The Galaxy website, which provides information inter alia on job vacancies in United Nations peacekeeping operations has been redesigned in accordance with General Assembly resolution 59/266. The different pages have been translated into French, and the French and English versions of the website were launched simultaneously.

64. **Introducing a programme for recruitment and promotion of peacekeeping activities**, carried out by a team capable of working in English and French, and in other official languages. This team will be able to select and recruit French-speaking candidates more efficiently. Currently four out of the eight Professional staff responsible for recruitment and promotion are bilingual English and French speakers.

65. **Introduction of a more active policy to identify candidates**. This involves building strong partnerships, including with Member States, non-governmental organizations and universities. Examples of promotion activities include meetings with the French-speaking group on the difficulties recruiting a sufficient number of French-speaking candidates, the sessions with CADADEM (Canada's Civilian Reserve), Centre for Information, Counselling and Training (Cinfo) (Switzerland) and the Association des étudiants en sciences politiques (Political science students association) (Paris). In February 2006, DPKO sent a note verbale to all Member States, in English and French, asking them to recommend qualified candidates in the area of procurement. The Department is also carrying out targeted recruitment

campaigns via periodicals such as *Jeune Afrique*, *The Economist* and *The Wall Street Journal Asia* and websites such as ReliefWeb, where job vacancies can be posted in French and English. In addition to these measures, a small part of the 2006-2007 budget was specially earmarked for recruitment drives carried out directly in French-speaking countries.

66. **Setting up a working group** responsible for ensuring the deployment of a sufficient number of French-speaking military, police and civil agents in peacekeeping operations.

Training

67. In addition to this recruitment strategy, work is also being carried out in the area of training. During the first six months of 2006, the Integrated Training Service of DPKO took part in several meetings organized by the International Organisation of the Francophonie (OIF) on the topic of the use of French in the Department. There is now a strong partnership between DPKO and OIF for more systematic integration of French in teaching and training material. The organization of a support team for the selection of French-speaking African police officers, which took place in Senegal and Cameroon in June 2006, is an example of this cooperation.

68. The Integrated Training Service has also set up a partnership with the French Joint Service Intelligence and Language School (EIREL) based in Strasbourg, France, which agreed to translate from English into French all general and basic training modules, and which organizes peacekeeping training sessions in French. This cooperation project is in its early stages and its scope could be broadened. The Service has also published a certain amount of training material in French and has conducted two French-proficiency examinations. These examinations are designed to assess the knowledge of French of the military observers selected for missions in French-speaking countries. These examination sheets are now distributed to all Member States and to field missions.

69. Training in French and English, for mission senior professional staff, is scheduled to start in 2007 in Nigeria, for members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

IV. Promotion and preservation of languages

70. Safeguarding and defending their indigenous languages is a people's fundamental right. By adopting Economic and Social Council resolution 2000/222, on the establishment of a Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, a subsidiary body of the Council, the United Nations and its Member States pledged to resolve the problems facing indigenous people, particularly with regard to the safeguarding of languages and cultures. The International Mother Language Day is celebrated on 21 February each year in order to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism.

71. Many United Nations bodies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and International Labour Organization (ILO) reported to the permanent body in May 2006. It was noted that an increasing amount of training

is conducted in indigenous languages, with many publications aimed at upholding the rights of indigenous people produced in these languages. Similarly, the Millennium Development Goals were translated into several languages, just as ILO translated its Convention (No. 169) concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries into several languages, including indigenous languages, and is also planning on translating various teaching aids into these languages. In the context of the Global Environment Facility small grants programme, UNDP held training sessions in indigenous languages, particularly in Latin America.

72. There are still many obstacles to the use and safeguarding of indigenous languages and cultures, as noted in the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people (A/60/358). In this context, UNESCO highlights the need to develop curricula, adapted in terms of language and cultural aspects, in which the relevant history, values, languages and oral traditions are acknowledged, respected and encouraged.

73. The Statistics Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs is working closely with the Permanent Forum in order to influence national census-taking practice to obtain data on indigenous people, particularly concerning the use and preservation of their languages. At the end of 2005 this Department published data on national and ethnic groups on its website. The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity uses the Ethnologue database in order to also gather data on linguistic diversity and the number of speakers of indigenous languages. Let us recall that in 2001, UNESCO published the *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger of Disappearing*.

74. The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues has a crucial role to play. It must strive to help its 16 members ensure that the concerns of indigenous people regarding languages are taken into account more systematically in all United Nations activities.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

75. The conclusions of the previous report on multilingualism (A/58/363) remain valid. Efforts to promote multilingualism are vital for fostering diversity and plurality within the United Nations. They also enable the Organization to provide the best possible support to Member States, particularly in their deliberative bodies, and to project the work and values of the United Nations to the largest audience. At the same time, multilingualism has been approached by most Departments in a pragmatic way, with the focus on ensuring the greatest efficiency and professional quality of work.

76. The greatest obstacle to multilingualism in outputs is the shortage of resources, for while consistent funding is available for translating parliamentary documents into the six official languages, the same is not true for publications. Maintenance of websites in various languages must largely be accomplished "within existing resources". Departments must prepare their sites in the official languages selectively, both with regard to the materials and the languages covered. The latter is sometimes influenced by the availability of staff members having the required language skills, by external agencies providing funding or in-kind services for particular languages, as well as by anticipated target audiences. The Secretariat is

continuing to seek innovative solutions and partnerships to achieve greater linguistic parity, to the extent permitted by available resources.

Other measures to be taken

Network of focal points

77. A network of focal points for multilingualism should be set up, along the lines of the network of focal points for women. Its role would be to ensure that the issue of multilingualism is taken into account in departments' various work programmes and everyday activities. The focal points would disseminate the policy introduced by the Coordinator for multilingualism and ensure the application of directives, in particular in the area of Internet-based resources. They would also play a role in promoting multilingualism, listing the possible technical and human resources that could be used to foster balanced use of languages and encourage the dissemination of information in the six official languages. They could identify the priorities and update website content in order to provide the public with access to information in one of the Organization's official languages. The focal points would also be required to report to the Coordinator on the progress made and on outstanding issues and/or obstacles encountered in the promotion of multilingualism.

78. This focal point function, which would be integrated in the everyday activities of the appointed person, would have no additional budgetary implications. Each year, a meeting of focal points could be held under the supervision of the Coordinator in order to assess the progress made in the work carried out and to redefine the broad thrust of the policy introduced.

Establishing partnerships with external institutions and bodies

79. Experience has shown the usefulness and importance of partnerships. For more equal treatment of languages within the Secretariat and the United Nations system, it is necessary to pursue an even more dynamic policy of seeking partnerships in the academic sector with institutions capable of translating website content into languages other than English. This would allow resources to be freed up in the area of translation and allocated to other tasks. Greater cooperation with groups of countries sharing the same languages or with institutions such as the International Organisation of the Francophonie, the African Union and the European Union, could enable the Junior Professional Officer (JPO) programme to be extended; Governments could be requested to advertise posts for interpreters and translators to work in the United Nations system.

80. Partnerships could also be envisaged with translation and interpreting schools to ensure continuity of service by creating in-house training opportunities for student interpreters/translators.

Adopting a pragmatic approach

81. A pragmatic approach to internal communication should be adopted. The model developed by UNESCO could be used, whereby texts are published on the iSeek website in one or other of the official languages, with translations of articles not provided systematically but according to the type of information concerned. In this way, not all available resources would be allocated to translation but could be used for different tasks.

82. Multilingualism must be an ongoing concern in the information production chain, from the initial drafting of a document or item of information targeted at several people, and should not be considered as a simple link in the chain (often at the end of the chain, when the question of translation arises). This would enable greater consistency and streamlining of document production.

83. The impact of information technologies on the productivity of conference service staff has already been mentioned. The main advantages of these technologies are: increased standardization and accuracy of translation and interpretation (given the essentially intellectual nature of the main functions performed, which do not lend themselves to total computerization, the use of software has little impact on speed of work in the current context). The application of information technologies to the tasks of publishing, translation and interpretation entails the use of programmes, tools and working methods that have no equivalent in the other services of the Secretariat.

Peacekeeping operations

84. Considerable progress has been noted: the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is continuing its efforts to ensure language coherence between the main peacekeeping actors, the local population, the United Nations administration and the contingents involved. A common language base would facilitate and accelerate communication, or at least avoid the complication of procedures that can already be difficult, given the nature of the operations involved. Initiatives have been implemented to allow contingents arriving in the field to have some knowledge of the most widely used language on site. Efforts have also been made to find candidates with technical and linguistic skills corresponding to the requirements of the mission. These initiatives must now be maintained and encouraged.

Human resources

85. A dynamic and proactive policy for planning replacements should be introduced, to ensure the renewal of language staff. Staff retirements should be planned well in advance, and all resources harnessed for recruitment. Partnership and cooperation with translation and interpreting schools would result in the creation of a reserve of linguistic resources that could be used as and when required. Setting up internship programmes would ensure the availability of staff when required.

86. Encouragement should be given to the initiative taken by the Group of Arab States to help organize a competitive examination for Arabic-language translators and interpreters, along the lines of the action taken by China and the Russian Federation to facilitate the recruitment of language staff in their respective language. These initiatives would make it possible to schedule staff losses owing to retirement, transfers or change of duty station, and plan for recruitment in the longer term.

87. It would perhaps also be helpful to list all initiatives taken by governments to improve the language skills of United Nations staff members.

88. A study should be carried out on the impact of incentive schemes to promote language learning. Depending on the results of the study, these schemes could be maintained, or stronger incentives introduced, and an environment and work culture more conducive to multilingualism developed within the Organization.

Safeguarding institutional memory

89. The difficulties caused by retirements and the need to set up a system for the effective replacement of all staff, especially language staff, must be acknowledged. Setting up a programme/system for sharing and pooling staff members' knowledge prior to their retirement, and implementing a proactive human resources policy, will enable departing staff to be replaced immediately. In addition, systematic policies for knowledge capture could create reserves of good practice relating to language issues.

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